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and a rotten white thread draggling after me through the wood, or tickling my nose, as if Ariadne and Arachne had lost their wits together. I go home, invoking the universe against sewing-machines; and beg the charity of a sound stitch or two from any of the maids who know their woman's art; and thenceforward the life of the glove proper begins. Now, it is not possible for any people that put up with this sort of thing to learn to paint, or do anything else with their fingers decently:—only, for the most part they don't think their museums are meant to show them how to do anything decently, but rather how to be idle, indecently. Which extremely popular and extremely erroneous persuasion, if you please, we must get out of our way before going further.

I owe some apology, by-the-way, to Mr. Frith, for the way I spoke of his picture in my letter to the Leicester committee, not intended for publication, though I never write what I would not allow to be published, and was glad that they asked leave to print it. It was not I who instanced the picture; it had been named in the meeting of the committee as the kind of thing that people best like, and I was obliged to say *why* people best liked it—namely, not for the painting, which is good, and worthy their liking, but for the sight of the racecourse and its humours. And the reason that such a picture ought not to be in a museum is precisely because in a museum people ought not to fancy themselves on a racecourse. If they want to see races, let them go to races; and if rogues, to Bridewells. They come to museums to see something different from rogues and races.

But, to put the matter at once more broadly, and more accurately, be it remembered, for sum of all, that a museum is not a theatre. Both are means of noble education—but you must not mix up the two. Dramatic interest is one thing; æsthetic charm another: a pantomime must not depend on its fine colour, nor a picture on its fine pantomime.

Take a special instance. It is long since I have been so pleased in the Royal Academy as I was by Mr. Britton Rivière's 'Sympathy.' The dog in uncaricatured doggedness, divine as Anubis, or the Dog-star; the child entirely childish and lovely, the carpet might have been laid by Veronese. A most precious picture in itself, yet not one for a museum. Everybody would think only of the story in it; everybody be wondering what the little girl had done, and how soon she would be forgiven, and, if she wasn't, how soon she would stop crying, and give the doggie a kiss, and comfort his heart. All which they might study at home among their own children and dogs just as well; and should not come to the museum to plague the real students there, since there is not anything of especial notableness or unrivalled quality in the actual painting.

On the other hand, one of the four pictures I chose for permanent teaching in *Fors* was one of a child and a dog. The child is doing nothing; neither is the dog. But the dog is absolutely and beyond comparison the best-painted dog in the world—ancient or modern—on this side of it, or at the Antipodes (so far as I've seen the contents of said world). And the child is painted so that child *cannot* be better done. *That* is a picture for a museum.

Not that dramatic, still less didactic, intention should disqualify a work of Art for museum purposes. But—broadly—dramatic and didactic Art should be universally national, the lustre of our streets, the treasure of our palaces, the pleasure of our homes. Much Art that is weak, transitory, and rude may thus become helpful to us. But the museum is only for what is eternally right, and well done, according to divine law and human skill. The

least things are to be there—and the greatest—but all *good* with the goodness that makes a child cheerful and an old man calm; the simple should go there to learn, and the wise to remember.

And now to return to what I meant to be the subject of this letter—the arrangement of our first ideal room in such a museum. As I think of it, I would fain expand the single room, first asked for, into one like Prince Houssain's—no, Prince Houssain had the flying tapestry, and I forget which prince had the elastic palace. But, indeed, it must be a lordly chamber which shall be large enough to exhibit the true nature of thread and needle—omened in "Thread-needle Street!"

The structure, first of wool and cotton, of fur, and hair, and down, of hemp, flax, and silk—microscope permissible if any cause can be shown *why* wool is soft, and fur fine, and cotton downy, and down downier; and how a flax-fibre differs from a dandelion-stalk, and how the substance of a mulberry-leaf can become velvet for Queen Victoria's crown, and clothing of purple for the housewife of Solomon.

Then the phase of its dyeing. What azures, and emeralds, and Tyrian scarlets can be got into fibres of thread!

Then the phase of its spinning. The mystery of that divine spiral, from finest to firmest, which renders lace possible at Valenciennes—anchorage possible, after Trafalgar—if Hardy had but done as he was bid.

Then the mystery of weaving. The eternal harmony of warp and woof, of all manner of knotting, knitting, and reticulation, the art which makes garment possible, woven from the top throughout, draughts of fishes possible, miraculous enough in any pilchard or herring shoal, gathered into companionable catchableness—which make, in fine, so many nations possible, and Saxon and Norman beyond the rest.

And, finally, the accomplished phase of needlework, the *Acu Tetigisti* of all time, which does, indeed, practically exhibit what mediæval theologists vainly tried to conclude inductively—how many angels can stand on a needle-point. To show the essential nature of a stitch—drawing the separate into the inseparable, from the lowly work of duly restricted sutor, and modestly installed cobbler, to the needle-Scripture of Matilda the Queen.

All the acicular Art of nations, savage and civilised, from Lapland boot, letting in no snow-water—to Turkey cushion bossed with pearl—to valance of Venice gold in needlework—to the counterpanes and samplers of our own lovely ancestresses, imitable, perhaps, once more, with good help from Whiteland's College—and Girton.

It was but yesterday, my own womankind were in much wholesome and sweet excitement delightful to behold, in the practice of some new device of remedy for rents (to think how much of evil there is in the two senses of that four-lettered word! as in the two methods of intonation of its synonym tear!) whereby it might be daintily effaced, and with a newness which would never make it worse. The process began beautifully, even to my uninformed eyes, in the likeness of herring-bone masonry, crimson on white, but it seemed to me marvellous that anything should yet be discoverable in needle process, and that of so utilitarian character.

All that is reasonable, I say, of such work is to be in our first museum-room. All that Athena and Penelope would approve. Nothing that vanity has invented for change, or folly loved for costliness; but all that can bring honest pride into homely life, and give security to health—and honour to beauty.

J. RUSKIN.

REALISM IN PAINTING.

"Realism and Idealism are so closely connected that it is difficult to draw the dividing line between them."—E. J. POYNTER, R.A.

IT is told of Turner that once, on being asked to paint a picture of a landscape, he asked the would-be purchaser, "Do you want a portrait of the place, or a picture of the general character of the locality?" Such a question seems a peculiar one, and certainly requires explanation. At the first glance it would appear absurd to ask an artist if he paints exactly what he sees, and represents nature as nearly as he can to the reality; because, as the art

of painting is description with the brush, it should surely be the case that one who draws every leaf or stone, never missing a single variation in colour and form, would be a better and more successful artist than one who only takes from nature what he chooses, and so rearranges and alters the scene that no one can tell the exact spot he has chosen. To say that Art can always improve on nature is a statement not likely to receive much approbation, for any one gazing

on the sun ascending among the pearly clouds of sunrise, or going down amid the brilliant warmth of an autumn sunset, might exclaim, "What Art can hope ever to imitate this?" But that is not what Turner meant in asking the question; he knew better than any one that no Art can ever rival Nature, far less improve on her, in such scenes. What he did mean was this: Do you wish the picture you are asking me to paint to be one particular view, taken exactly as it happens to occur from a given spot? or do you wish me to use my judgment as to what I shall insert and what omit? The first, any artist with an average degree of talent can accomplish, as the picture to be made is only a replica of the scene before him; while the latter, besides requiring—like the former—fidelity to nature both in form and colour, also requires the painter to use his discrimination and power in bringing up the principal features of the district, leaving out what is objectionable, and representing only what is beautiful and notable in the country. The former is Realism, the latter is Idealism.

Realism is painting nature exactly as it is, without the smallest change. It extends from the mere mechanical copying of nature, leaf for leaf, almost grain for grain, wherever it happens to occur. Some Realists say everything is worth painting, and no choice requires to be made; you are to walk half a mile into the country, sit down and paint what is before you, whatever it is; or paint the portrait of the first person you meet—and it must be fine, if from nature. It extends from this to choice of subject, beautiful finish, and exact detail. Nothing is, however, to be introduced which is not before the painter at the time of being painted, and also nothing is to be omitted which is in the scene. We will consider the merits of this, as contrasted with Idealism, which may shortly be termed the art of representing what we have never seen, but what we may have often wished to see.

Realism in Art has taken a strong hold on a large portion of the public during the past quarter of a century. Different causes have helped to bring about this result. Mr. Ruskin's views on pre-Raphaelitism have done much, but also, though in another way, and especially to the younger generation, the art of photography has, by its marvellous productions, led many to think that the perfection of Art must be in giving all details. Stereoscopic and other magnifying glasses make a photograph stand out as if in relief and reality, and many persons not unnaturally consider that this is everything that can be wished for in Art, and that a painting which endeavours to show all the details and clearness of the usual photograph should be esteemed as near this desirable perfection as possible. But, as is universally known, such perfection is not altogether possessed by photography. From reasons into which we do not at present require to enter, the result obtained is never correct in perspective—it is merely necessary to remind the reader here that such a mechanical production is far from being literally true, and it is only when something more than pure realistic photography (so to express it) is used that a good result is obtained.

To take another case. A sculptor, before beginning a bust, frequently takes a cast or mask of the head, but, although this is a purely realistic effect, it is used only to give the proportion of the features and the prominent bones, and is not thought of as a likeness, although there can be no doubting its correctness. The sculptor knows that something more is required than merely following the features at one particular moment.

Again, the art of portraiture in painting may be realistic, as, for instance, such a likeness that when a dog comes into the room he would go up to the picture, taking it to be his master. This to some people is the highest Art, and they speak of the painter as if he were a world's wonder. But such a picture is not properly speaking Art; it is simply a process which any fairly gifted person may accomplish; and, in fact, it is almost mechanical.

Realism may also be said to be contained in the notion that a picture must be such as can easily be proved from nature to be correct; there is to be nothing left for the imagination—the fancy must not be free; painters must be, and be only, artists who are fettered to copying Nature exactly as she appears. This would indeed be an ideal realistic artist, but, though many artists of the present day are styled realistic, few go entirely this length. Mr. Millais is a Realist, and that of very high order—in his way quite unsurpassed. His pictures are classed among the best productions of the century, but he has defects which detract from his

dignity. These defects may arise more from his training than from innate feeling, for he seems to be continually endeavouring to depict ideal scenes with a realistic pencil (and this may help to show how closely the ideal is allied to the real). The Earl of Southesk, in his "Britain's Art Paradise," 1871, mentions a picture, 'The Somnambulist,' by Millais, which the writer describes as being wrongly drawn and unbeautiful in form of shoulders and bust. And why so? asks the author. Because, he answers, "the modern Realism says the woman is to be made imperfect because perfect women are rare, and of all things the picture must look natural—must look real." This is what is so often objected to in Realism—it takes things as they are, and from one particular specimen, which, if it have any defects, are duly depicted, and being thus defective, it cannot—so says the Idealist—be taken as a fair sample of nature, and to be correct is not true nature because of these defects.

A late series of pictures by Mr. Millais may be taken as examples of what is meant by the statement that this artist is naturally more ideal in thought, if not in action, than he is usually considered to be. These three pictures record different persons at what are justly termed important periods of life. The first painted was 'Yes or No?' a lady undecided what answer to give her suitor—"swithering," as the Scotch would say. The second is plain decided 'No!' yet given with such a wonderful degree of refinement as to form a noble painting. The third is 'Yes!' In this last-named picture is an incident which, if there ever was one, ought to be treated ideally and poetically. A couple of lovers giving and receiving the old, old question and answer—here surely is food for the poet—for the imagination and highest art of the painter. Nearly every poet and novelist has essayed the subject, and there is, perhaps, more written about it than any other; but painters have seldom or never tried it, none at least until modern times—certainly none of the older masters. Marriage-feasts, Cupids, and Venuses in plenty, but never lovers at the all-important moment. One would therefore be inclined to think that Mr. Millais should treat what may be called an original subject in an original way, and use his imagination in his picture as well as in his title. But he does not. As a pre-Raphaelite, he considers that when he has thought out the subject of his picture he has exhausted his art; so he simply paints two portraits—one a lady, loving and lovely, the other a man, handsome and presumably happy. The spectator may bring with him as much poetic thought or imagination as he likes; but the painter gives him as little as possible, for the fault of Realism must always be that it takes too slight notice of these. Those pictures of Mr. Millais are beautiful works of Art, but they are only portraits, not embodiments of 'Yes!' 'No!' or 'Yes or No?' The meaning of the last might certainly be guessed, but it would only be a guess, while the others could be either both 'Yes!' or both 'No!' so little do the pictures tell of their own story. The thought of the pictures is idealistic, but the execution is purely realistic, and though they are bound to live in the spectator's memory as lovely pictures, it is only as works of Art in portraiture, not as lovers applicable to all time. They may also be taken as representative of modern realistic Art on the one hand, with the old masters' Cupids and other gods as idealistic on the other. The old painters, if they told of love, told it only in symbols with gods and goddesses; but the modern must have his love told in plain language, exactly as it would be, nothing added, nothing taken away.

There is nothing Realists despise more than angels and fairies. No one, they seem to say, ever saw an angel or fairy, and how then can they be painted? Leave such to artists who think they can represent what they never saw, but give us the substance, something we can feel and see, none of your imaginations, however pleasing. There is nothing more beautiful than Nature; let us study under her, and under no other.

Idealists, on the other hand, say, "Art is human labour regulated by human design," not a mere copy of what is before the painter, without interposition of the artist's power of design, imagination, and idealistic qualities. What is of the earth is earthy; let us try to be spiritual, not sensual; let us show we think there is a soul which is not seen as well as a body which is seen, and let us endeavour, if possible, to carry men's thoughts to different regions and more elevating themes than are to be met with every day. Let us show what we think is the perfection of beauty by

making every picture we produce as beautiful as possible, without reference to an exact copy of any one place or thing in nature. Let us, in fact, idealise everything we touch, and let us not be, as we think Realists are, ignoble and degrading. Let us be noble and aspiring, teaching men the great lessons of life, and thus fulfilling our mission as far as our intellect and training allow us, and as it becomes our position as reasonable and intellectual creatures to do.

Such is the style of language to be found in books, both new and old, written by supporters of ideal, or, as they somewhat presumptuously term it, "Great Art." But might we not ask, Why cannot the Realist teach us as well as the Idealist? Why cannot the Realist be noble and aspiring as well as the Idealist? Mr. Ruskin gives Raphael's 'Dispute of the Sacrament' as the type of the Florentine idealistic school, which picture is thus described by Mr. Wornum: "This painting contains some of the finest and most expressive heads of modern Art, and many of its draperies are cast with much grandeur of effect; the drawing also in the majority of the figures is unobjectionable. . . . This great picture is in two principal parts; the lower represents a council or assembly of the dignitaries of the Church on earth, and above in the clouds is a heavenly synod of saints and angels, with the three Persons of the Trinity, according to the Roman Church, in the centre." Yet of this highly ideal picture Sir Joshua Reynolds says, in his first Discourse: "Raphael appears to have made his sketch for this picture from one model; and the habit he had of drawing exactly from the form before him appears by his making all the figures with the same cap, such as his model happened to wear: so servile a copyist was this great man even at a time when he was allowed to be at the highest pitch of excellence."

In these two illustrations we have one given as an example of high ideal Art by an ardent advocate of Realism, while the other, of realistic Art, is given by as ardent a supporter of Idealism. Rather remarkably, here are two writers differing much in their ultimate conclusions on Art—one of last century, well known and widely read, the other of this century, at least as famous as a critic and as much studied, who each supports his own theory—Idealism and generalisation: Realism and definition—subjects considered as in opposition the one to the other. Yet these authors can point to the same picture as an example of the two terms.

There is, however, another kind of Idealism from Raphael's. Barry, the Royal Academy Professor of Painting at the end of the last century, was a so-called Idealist, but he could not make a likeness of any one object in the universe. When he attempted it his hand refused its office; and accordingly he set up for an example of the great or ideal style of Art, which at that time was thought to cover all defects. And we also hear that another professor of painting and Art critic at the beginning of this century, Fuseli, complained that Nature put him out—that is, he could not draw what he saw before him, and rather blamed Nature than blamed himself; and he was one of those who thought that not to copy nature is the rule for attaining perfection. "Because they could not paint the objects which they had seen, they fancied themselves qualified to paint the ideas which they had not seen." Hazlitt also tells of another Idealist, the celebrated Sir Benjamin West, who wrote a description or advertisement of his *own* picture, 'Death on the Pale Horse,' which is now, alas! quite forgotten, that "its having for its subject the Terrible Sublime, it would place Great Britain in the same conspicuous relation to the rest of Europe in arts that the battle of Waterloo had done in arms!"

But Realism is very apt to descend into imitation, and imitation is the very lowest form of Art; for whenever we find anything in painting becoming mere imitation, and sensual pleasure being taken in the cleverness of the deception, we have sensationalism, which, while it pleases, at the same time degrades. For the surprise which the onlooker finds in ascertaining that what he sees is not what he thought it to be takes away the feeling of pleasure he would feel if what is represented be legitimate Art. It is curious that any object which is of itself small and comparatively mean can be imitated so closely as to be for a moment deceptive, but an object with any expression or grand beauty cannot be so depicted.

"We may 'paint a cat or a fiddle so that they look as if we could take them up,' but we cannot imitate anything really great, as the ocean or the Alps. We can imitate fruit, but not a tree; flowers, but not a pasture; cut glass, but not a rainbow."

Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his Discourses, seems to be in great perplexity about the matter of what artists should paint. At one time he tells students that they should study from Nature, and her only. At another he says a mere copier of Nature can never produce anything great. These statements can be reconciled by remembering that all writers on Art, without exception, however much they may differ as to more advanced artists, advise students to practise from Nature at first until they have overcome the mechanical difficulties of their art.

When an artist sits down to paint a picture, it is, or should be, his intention to do so as well as ever he can; and, unless he has to paint for the morrow's dinner (which sadly alters the case), he ought to spare no pains to bring his picture to such a state of finish that the educated spectator's thought will take up the theme and carry his mind to pleasures he did not anticipate. For, as Sir Joshua says, "the value and rank of every art is in proportion to the mental labour employed on it, or the mental pleasures produced by it; although, at the same time, as the great end of the art is to strike the imagination, the painter is to make no ostentation of the means by which this is produced, the spectator having only to *feel* the result in his bosom. An inferior artist is unwilling that any part of his industry should be lost upon the spectator, and he takes as much pains to discover as the great artist does to conceal the marks of his subordinate assiduity."

Some who aspire to produce good Art are apt to believe that they have but to follow certain rules and they shall soon be perfect; but greatness never attained attention to rules, and no rules in the world will ever elevate a man unless he has the quality within him. All authorities concur in laying down certain rules, as that the young student should study attentively from nature, and what are nature in stone, the ancient Greek statues; and that constant practice from these only can give a good style. But, after he has overcome the preliminary difficulties of his art, he will then find that rules are only fetters. Up to this time the student has only learned the language he is to write in, and all his work has been like a schoolboy's. When the boy leaves school he does not necessarily cease to learn, but each day until the end finds him with some new experience. So with the artist, after he has mastered the mechanical part of the painter's craft. He has now no school-book, no teacher, no guide except Nature; he must trust now to her and to himself, nothing else will be of much assistance. And when he has reached this length he cannot stand still, he must either improve or retrograde. Then he has to decide whether he will continue Realist, or enter the realms of Idealism. But he will very soon find that the boundary between Idealism and Realism is very indefinite, and that he may go from the one to the other by a turn of the brush or a movement of the pencil. And, if he only carefully and conscientiously paints what he wishes to represent, he cannot fail to become a master.

In conclusion. Realism, although more limited than Idealism, is not necessarily opposed to it, the dividing mark being hardly perceptible, and a due proportion of Realism being quite necessary to Idealism. The very highest Idealism relies on Realism for its greatest achievements, and granting that the latter may not be so ambitious as the former, still the power it possesses is absolute; for without Realism, to some extent, pictures would be mere assemblages of colour, in which form would be scarcely distinguishable, and which, therefore, could not convey accurate truth or beauty to the spectator, which is the principal duty of painting. At the same time Realism may be very fairly contrasted and compared with Idealism, in the way we compare and contrast history with poetry in literature. For, as no one should think of maintaining that history is opposed to poetry, because the one usually is Idealistic, while the other is Realistic, the Ideal is the poetry, while the Real is the history, and when it is claimed for Realism in Art a corresponding position to that which history has in literature, it is held that such a position is not at all in opposition to Idealism, but is its principal guide and assistant.

D. C. THOMSON.